

Everybody is a Star



Disconaut AAA (Association of Autonomous Astronauts)

no.4 (Summer 1999)

Disco Ball in Orbit!

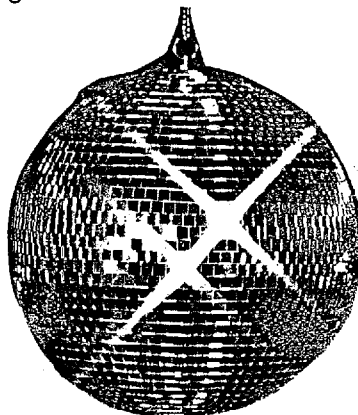
As Disconaut AAA was preparing for the Space 1999 Festival in June 1999, NASA attempted to upstage it by putting a disco ball into orbit. Starshine is a 48cm ball covered with 900 highly-polished mirrors intended to reflect the sun's rays so as to be observable from the ground until it burns up on re-entering the atmosphere in eight months time. It was launched by the space shuttle Discovery. Linda Ham, a NASA flight director, said "Essentially it's a disco ball" (BBC Online News, 5 June 1999).

Can it really be a coincidence that nearly three years ago **Everybody is a Star!** drew attention to the significance of disco mirror balls for spaceflight:

"these spheres of light suspended high above the dance-floor... were installed to equip dancers with a rudimentary astronomical knowledge to help

them find their way around the universe" (EiaS, no.1).

Ostensibly Starshine has been launched as part of a global Internet science project for schools. We are confident that an unexpected side effect will be to stimulate mass disco frenzy across the planet. People will stream out of schools, offices and factories and dance in the streets. Capitalism will collapse, and as the world human community emerges from the ruins construction of the next generation of galaxy-friendly spaceships will begin.



Anti-Gravity 12": it's official

Further evidence of NASA's attempts to catch up with the Disconauts has emerged in an article published in New Scientist magazine (6 February 1999).

E.E. Podkletnov, a materials scientist in the Moscow Chemical Scientific Research Centre claims to have invented a device that blocks the force of gravity, and NASA has awarded \$600,000 to a project to test this. Antigravity research has previously been dismissed by mainstream science.

According to the article: "NASA is paying an Ohio-based company, Superconductive Components, to build a 12-inch superconducting disc to continue a series of experiments on gravity shielding". Podkletnov claims that a similar spinning disc he designed lost weight.

Of course, DJs have long been aware of the anti-gravity possibilities of spinning 12" discs. Perhaps we just need to spin them a lot faster than present turntable technology allows to achieve take off.

Film reviews

More spaced out than Neil
Armstrong:

Human traffic (1999)

Human Traffic is basically a feature length advert for ecstasy and club culture. After the opening credit scenes of Reclaim the Streets and anti-Criminal Justice Act demos, this loved up Saturday Night, Sunday Morning follows a group of friends from their dead-end jobs through their weekend of partying to the inevitable come down.

It is refreshingly unmoralistic - people take drugs and nobody dies, shock, even if some of it is a little self-congratulatory (isn't-our-scene-wonderful-the-grown-ups-just-don't-understand). Best of all it reaffirms Disconaut AAA's analysis of the intimate link between dance cultures and space exploration.

Planning the night out one of the characters looks forward to getting 'more spaced out than Neil Armstrong'. Later as they blissfully come up on the dancefloor, the narrator muses "we're spacemen floating above the earth... we're part of a movement, a movement of escape". At a party later a woman shouts to the sky "come on ETs, abduct us from Planet Cardiff... take us to a

world where the drugs are free, where the clubs have no gravity, and every shag has a guaranteed orgasm". There is also a good stoned Star Wars conversation, with the suggestion that Darth Vader is an intergalactic crack dealer who had made so much profit he's built his own planet, the Death Star.

In fact it's hard to believe that somebody involved in the film hadn't come across the AAA -or maybe we're just reflecting the ideas that are in everybody's heads.

**The Prettiest Star:
Velvet Goldmine (dir. Todd Haynes, 1998)**

Todd Haynes gorgeous paean to what he has called Glam's "camp attack on rock and roll" in the early 70s follows the career of 'Brian Slade' a thinly disguised David Bowie. Bizarrely the film was criticised by some for its lack of depth and authenticity, slightly missing the fact that this is the whole point. Velvet Goldmine positively celebrates the possibilities of radical self-reinvention through playing with appearances: glam 'said flaunt it if you've got it, and if you haven't got it fake it - make it up with make-up, cover your face with stardust, reinvent yourself as a Martian androgyne'(Barney Hoskins). David Bowie typified this

in his Ziggy Stardust bisexual alien persona.

Bowie of course drew on space imagery in songs like Starman and Space Oddity, but in itself this is a banal observation - there are lots of space-themed pieces of music. What is interesting is that in Glam rock, as in disco, astro-jazz and maybe space rock, space is seen as the place for exploring different ways of living and being. In particular "the glam era presented to the world a new and radically fluid model for sexual identity: no longer defined by its permanence, but the multi-coloured result of constant change and reinvention" (Todd Haynes).

Velvet Goldmine itself opens with spaceship leaving the infant Oscar Wilde on a Dublin doorstep in 1854, suggesting that a line of (alien-inspired?) decadent dandyism can be traced from Wilde through to Glam. The spaceship returns in the final scene to shower stardust over the Kings Cross rooftops where the film's main protagonist has just been shagged senseless by Ewan MacGregor's 'Curt Wild' (Iggy Pop basically).

Needless to say Sandy Powell's glammed-up costumes also gave us lots of ideas for anti-masculine non-functional spacewear.

Interstellar Journeys by DJ

In the last year, Neil Disconaut has subjected several public spaces to his collection of space-themed classics, including the Space Cafe at 56a Info Shop and the Pembury Tavern in Hackney. Some of these are disco or funk tracks, others more recent dance music outings. More recently a kitschcore element has begun to emerge, not to mention the odd punk track.

For starship-spotters everywhere, here's a list of some of our favourite songs for swinging disconauts:

101 Strings - Fly me to the moon (from the 1969 easy listening compilation Marbles on the Moon) / Sun Ra - Strange Celestial Road, 1980/Scientist Dub Landing, Meteorite, 1981/Primal Scream - Higher than the sun, 1991/Crown Heights Affair - Galaxy of Love, 1978/Joey Negro - Universe of Love, 1993/Masters at Work - Dancing in Outer Space, 1997 (remix of 1970s Atmosfear classic)/Babe Instinct - Disco Babes from Outer Space, 1998/Sheila & B. Devotion - Spacer ("in this galaxy, you can trust eve-

ryone that you meet"), 1979?/Slick - Space Bass, 1979/Earth, Wind and Fire- Jupiter, 1977/Parliament - Big Bang Theory, 1979/Parliament - Gloryhallastoopid ("there are eight million stories in the naked universe, but they've all got Black Holes")/War - Galaxy ("take me to your place in space. I'm sick and tired of the rat race"), 1975/Gil-Scott Heron - Space Shuttle, 1990/Sylvester - Stars (Everybody is One), 1979/Prodigy - Out of Space, 1992/Beastie Boys - Intergalactic, 1998/Optic Eye - Wobbling in Space, 1994/Tornados - Telstar, 1962/ Spizz Energi - Where's Captain Kirk? ("Spock pulled me through as we went Warp Factor 2"), 1979/Only Ones- Another Girl, Another Planet ("Space travel's in my blood, I don't find it irritating"), 1978/Spiritualized - Ladies and Gentlemen we are floating in space (1997)... all mixed up with Conquest of Space - historical documentary record of the first manned space orbit flight by Major Yuri Gagarin, a 7 inch classic from 1961.

The Association of Autonomous Astronauts is a non-hierarchical network of local, community-based space exploration programmes (see www.uncarved.demon.co.uk/aaa.html). Disconaut AAA was set up to explore the potential of dance cultures for autonomous space exploration. You can check out other Disconaut material at www.uncarved.demon.co.uk/dnaut.html. Our e-mail address is: practicalhistory@hotmail.com

